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ABSTRACT

This guide defines diffusion as the process by which a program or technique is transferred from the site where it was developed to another site. Effective diffusion is based on an understanding of how people and organizations can be helped to change as well as how programs are implemented. It is preceded by a carefully planned transition from operating the program to diffusing it. This guide is designed to assist educators responsible for diffusion to understand the diffusion process, to plan for initiating a diffusion project, and to assess needs for further work on the project's diffusion efforts. (Author/RE)

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EDUCATIONAL MANAGERS' GUIDE TO DIFFUSION

AN INSTRUCTIONAL/ASSESSMENT RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS ENGAGED IN PROGRAM DIFFUSION

* *LOOKING AT DIFFUSION*
* *PLANNING FOR DIFFUSION*
* *DIFFUSION PLANNING GUIDE*
* *THE DIFFUSION PROCESS*
* *DIFFUSION STRATEGY ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT*
* *SUMMARY OF RESULTS*

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LOOKING AT DIFFUSION

Diffusion is the process by which a program or technique is transferred from the site where it was developed to another site.

Programs and techniques are diffused because they have worked effectively in the developing site and hold promise for meeting similar objectives in other sites. The innovation may be as simple as a technique for graphing student progress or as complex as a comprehensive special education program.

Program developers engaging in diffusion must direct their thinking toward what it takes to help others implement what they have developed--something quite different from developing the original program or technique. Adopters are faced with the challenge of learning new skills, using new materials, and perhaps relating in new ways to children or colleagues.

In summary, then, effective diffusion is based on an understanding of how people and organizations can be helped to change as well as how programs are implemented. It is preceded by a carefully planned transition from operating the program to diffusing it.

The Educational Managers' Guide to Diffusion is designed to assist educators responsible for diffusion:

--to understand the diffusion process

--to plan for becoming a diffusion project

--to assess needs for further work on the project's diffusion efforts

PLANNING FOR DIFFUSION

Developing a model program is very different from *diffusing* a model program. Whether the innovation being diffused is simple or complex the diffusion *process* is always complex. Because of this, the importance of careful and thorough planning can not be overstressed.

The Planning Steps listed below are intended to guide you as you re-conceptualize your project as a resource capable of meeting needs in other settings.

1. Define what is to be diffused
   What are the components of the total model?
   Which components which can be adopted/adapted as separate elements (i.e. screening procedure, remediation approach, use of paraprofessionals)?

2. Determine adaptation possibilities
   What elements of the original model or components can be modified to better fit local conditions?
   To answer this, the project staff should determine which elements it considers to be essential and which it considers adaptable without jeopardizing the integrity of the original model.

3. Determine adoption procedures
   What methods would most effectively equip adopters to implement the program (level of training, type of information to be provided, type of follow-up assistance required, sequence of steps, materials, forms, etc.)?

4. Determine ways to involve the program staff in planning for diffusion activities that may affect the day-to-day operation of the regular program (site visits, demonstration teaching, release time for training,etc.)

5. Determine criteria for selecting adopters
   What resources (financial and other), support, and characteristics should adopters possess? Are there geographic or distance considerations important to the selection of sites?

6. Determine number of adopter sites project can work with. The resources of the project should be considered realistically since it is likely that the demand will be greater than the project can respond to. What criteria will be applied to select adopters?

7. Identify specific procedures for informing program staff, students, and parents about diffusion objectives, activities and outcomes.

8. Identify existing diffusion networks and agencies as sources of possible adopters or resources (e.g. State Department of Education, USOE National Diffusion Network, NIE International Exchange).

9. Plan the overall timeline of activities.

10. Budget resources (staff, money, space).

11. Develop a documentation system for recording specific activities and information. What do various groups need to know (managers, staff, funding agency, etc.)?

12. Develop an evaluation plan for diffusion, including awareness activities, training, materials and visits.

A final thought on planning . . .

The list of planning considerations above imply an extensive planning phase prior to beginning actual diffusion activities. Making the transition from program development to program diffusion is a complex change effort in itself--one requiring ongoing attention to refining plans and approaches.

Diffusion Planning Checklist

	Decision or Next Step	Person Responsible	Dates
1. What is to be diffused?			
2. What are the adaptation possibilities?			
3. What are the adoption procedures?			
4. How can program staff be involved?			
5. What are the criteria for selecting adopters?			
6. How many sites will there be?			
7. How are staff, parents, students, etc., to be informed?			
8. What diffusion networks and agencies should be contracted?			
9. What is the overall timeline?			
10. How are resources allocated?			
11. What are the documentation needs and mechanisms?			
12. How will the diffusion activities and materials be evaluated?			

THE DIFFUSION PROCESS

Diffusion can be thought of as existing on a continuum starting with informing people about the program or technique to be diffused and continuing until the innovation is a stable, integral part of the operation of the school.

The major phases along this continuum can be labeled

INITIATION: that part of the process in which potential adopters are informed, examine the innovation's relevance to their needs, and arrange to receive training and resources necessary to implement.

IMPLEMENTATION: the preparation of adopters and their organization to carry out the program or utilize the techniques. During this phase, adaptations are made to the program and results are monitored.

INTEGRATION: supporting the program during implementation to help make it a stable part of the school's program. On-going training needs are determined and met, problem solving, or "trouble-shooting", is done, and the impact of the program is assessed.

INITIATION		IMPLEMENTATION			INTEGRATION
AWARENESS	IDENTIFICATION AND NEGOTIATION	TRAINING	TRIAL ADOPTION	IMPLEMENTATION	ON-GOING SUPPORT

STEPS IN THE DIFFUSION PROCESS

The following steps represent a comprehensive view of the diffusion process. Like most modules depicting human processes, the steps are neither absolutely sequential or universally applicable.

The specific steps in the diffusion process which parallel the above phases are: Awareness, Identification, Negotiation, Training, Trial Adoption, Implementation, Monitoring, and Ongoing Support.

AWARENESS

1. Determine target audiences: who, current knowledge and assumptions, information needs
2. Design awareness strategy: form, timing, method, response mechanism
3. Create awareness materials: format, cost, production, distribution
4. Arrange and conduct visits to the demonstration site: purpose, program aspects

IDENTIFICATION AND NEGOTIATION

1. Identify potential adopters: criteria, characteristics
2. Collect data and assess needs of potential adopters
3. Negotiate involvement with potential adopter: negotiators, commitments
4. Identify strategy for building local support
   What groups and individuals (desicionmakers, opinion leaders, etc.) can provide meaningful support?

TRAINING

1. Design training program: content, format, accomodating trainee needs
2. Plan training event(s): logistics, staff, resources
3. Conduct and evaluate effectiveness of training event

TRIAL ADOPTION

1. Determine necessary adaptations in components or model with adopter

2. Negotiate trial adoption: implementation plan, resource allocation, timeline, evaluation criteria, monitoring procedure

3. Implement and evaluate trial adoption

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Renegotiate adoption agreement: commitment, expectations, responsibilities

2. Confirm availability of needed resources: space, personnel, materials

3. Finalize implementation plan, including on-going involvement with developer

4. Specify impact evaluation design

5. Determine documentation/recordkeeping system

ON-GOING SUPPORT

1. Monitor effectiveness data
   What adaptations seem necessary

2. Nurture support mechanisms

3. Assist with problem solving (trouble-shooting)

4. Provide necessary additional training

DIFFUSION STRATEGY ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

Considering your project in its present state, rate the following diffusion activities using the scales below.

STEPS IN THE DIFFUSION PROCESS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO US				NOT IMPORTANT TO US	BEING IMPLEMENTED OR READY TO GO				NO DECISION OR PLANS MADE YET	PLANNING NEED AREAS
I. AWARENESS											
1. Determine target audiences	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Design awareness strategy	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Create awareness materials	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Arrange and conduct visits	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
II. IDENTIFICATION AND NEGOTIATION											
1. Identify potential adopters	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Collect data, assess needs	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Negotiate involvement	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Identify strategy for local support	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
III. TRAINING											
1. Design training program	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Plan training events	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Conduct training and evaluate effectiveness	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
IV. TRIAL ADOPTION											
1. Determine necessary adaptations	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Negotiate trial adoption	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Implement and evaluate trial adoption	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
V. IMPLEMENTATION											
1. Renegotiate adoption agreement	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Confirm availability of resources	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Finalize implementation plan	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Specify impact evaluation design	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
5. Determine documentation system	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
VI. ONGOING SUPPORT											
1. Monitor effectiveness data	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Nurture support mechanisms	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Assist with problem solving	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Provide additional training	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
5. Link with other adopters	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
6. Provide additional resources	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

TOTAL NUMBER OF HIGH DISCREPANCY STATEMENTS	INDICATION
14 - 28	Considerable attention needs to be directed to developing the project's diffusion plan
7 - 14	Some fine tuning of diffusion plan needed
0 - 7	Diffusion strategy and plans in good shape